

Promotional giveaways have little value

By Roger Boye

More questions about coins and paper money are answered this week.

Q—Last month we received several Latin American coins during a promotion at local McDonald's restaurants. The items include a one-centavo piece from Guatemala and 20 centimos from Peru. What are they worth?

H. K., Cicero

A—The McDonald's giveaways are extremely common among collectors and have just nominal legal-tender value.

Q—I have a new dollar bill that is missing the two serial numbers and Treasury seal. Could you tell me if this is a collector's item?

D.M., Chicago

A—Definitely! U.S. "greenbacks" are made in three steps: first the back side, then most of the front side, and finally the

serial numbers and seals, which hobbyists call the "overprint." Most likely, two sheets were fed through the overprint press at the same time, with the sheet containing your note on the bottom.

Catalogues suggest that bills missing the overprint and in crisp, uncirculated condition would retail in the \$175 to \$225 range.

Q—Are "proof" and "uncirculated" coins the same?

P.O., Wheaton

A—No. "Proof" refers to the method of manufacture, not to the grade or condition of a coin. The U.S. Mint makes proofs with polished dies and slugs, and normally strikes each coin twice during the production process to enhance coin detail. Proofs that

show damage from use are called "impaired."

"Uncirculated" is a condition category for coins showing no trace of wear.